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TAGS: PGOV PINR KDEM HO

SUBJECT: TFH01: HONDURAS COUP: POLITICAL WRAP-UP 08/19/09

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 778
B. TEGUCIGALPA 765

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Simon Henshaw, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (U) This is another in a series of round-ups of political news in the aftermath of the June 28 forcible removal and exile of President Manuel Zelaya from Honduras.

¶12. (C) In an August 17 meeting between the elections donor working group (GSE) and the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) hosted by UNDP, USAID Acting Director made it clear to the TSE that election assistance from the USG was being provided with the expectation of a return to the constitutional order through the San Jose Accord. The TSE stated that the elections should be viewed as legitimate no matter what the current political situation, since the candidates were selected and the elections convoked before June 28. The TSE anticipates that there will be approximately 192,000 poll workers and 15,000 voting stations. The TSE requested additional donor support in the area of training, transparency, and computer equipment. August 23 is the deadline to finalize the national voter list and the electoral campaign period is scheduled to begin August 31.

¶13. (C) Emboff attended a meeting held for diplomats, press, and civil society by the Association for a More Just Society (ASJ), a grassroots human rights organization on August 19. The ASJ presented a draft open letter to the public regarding the political crisis, stating that the crisis should be used as an opportunity to reform Honduran politics. ASJ stressed that they do not support Micheletti or Zelaya, and are concerned that leading presidential candidates "Pepe" Lobo and Elvin Santos were treating the upcoming election as "politics as usual." ASJ is exploring measures to increase transparency and grass-roots interaction through churches in hopes of building demand for more accountability by politicians and other leaders.

Human Rights Visit

¶14. (C) Charge met with Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) representative Paolo Carozza (United States) August 18. Carozza said that he expects the press release on August 21 will be balanced, but cannot predict what commission head Luz Patricia Mejia (Venezuela) will say in her press conference. More details on the IACHR mission will be reported septel.

Anti-Coup Camp Concerned

15. (C) Poloffs met with Flor Santamaria (protect), who has served as an informal liaison between the Embassy and a group of 21 dissident Congressional Deputies who oppose the coup, as well as other opponents of the coup. Santamaria noted that coup opponents were worried about the de facto regime representatives' trip to Washington, along with trips by Lobo and Santos to the United States, and whether it signals a potential softening of the U.S. position toward the coup. Poloffs assured her that this was not the case. She also noted concerns that if the crisis is not resolved through the San Jose Accord in the next two weeks, the more radical element of the pro-Zelaya movement -- and Zelaya himself -- will become more focused on disruption of elections and possibly increasing the level of violent protest.

16. (C) Santamaria suggested there should be an effort to create a domestic commission of respected individuals from all sides to discuss three key elements needed to bring the Micheletti side to acceptance of the accord: composition and role of the Verification and Truth Commissions; selection process of the proposed national unity government; and mechanisms for enforcing the accord and consequences for violations. She suggested former Human Rights Commissioner Leo Valladares would likely be willing to help assemble such a commission, and would benefit from Embassy support with our contacts (Note: Valladares is a respected moderate, who is known as an opponent of the coup, but not a supporter of Zelaya. He participated in the Ambassador's gathering of representatives of all sides on August 13 (Ref B). End note).

HENSHAW